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By Sharon Keeler
UNH News Bureau

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Geographic information systems (GIS) have changed the way people see the world. Businesses, schools, governments and organizations use GIS for a variety of applications, from modeling earth processes and mapping natural resources at the global scale, to analyzing crime patterns and evaluating land use proposals at the local level.

The public is invited to learn more about GIS and the geo-spatial sciences at the University of New Hampshire's GIS Day 2000 Wednesday, Nov. 15. GIS Day takes place during National Geography Awareness Week (Nov. 13-17) and has been proclaimed as National Geographic Information System Day in New Hampshire by Governor Jeanne Shaheen.

The UNH GIS Day 2000 events are sponsored by the New Hampshire Space Grant Consortium and UNH's Complex Systems Research Center and are scheduled to take place between 2 and 5 p.m. at the Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space in Morse Hall on the Durham campus. The events are free and open to the public.

GIS is a computer-based tool for mapping, analyzing, and displaying data related to locations on the Earth's surface. Simply put, GIS combines layers of information to give people a better understanding of a place, so they can make better management decisions.

For example, GIS can be used to help reach a decision about the location of a new housing development that has minimal environmental impact, is located in a low-risk area, and is close to a population center.

"The use of computers and geographic information systems is particularly important in the current-day study of geography," says Michael Routhier, UNH information technologist and GIS Day events coordinator. "UNH has been a leader in the development of GIS projects nationally since the

inception of the statewide GIS, known as GRANIT. Through the use of GRANIT, the university is helping the state apply GIS to the fields of land use planning, economic development, natural resource protection and public safety."

UNH also participates in national grants which use GIS for the study of global scale earth phenomena such as hydrologic processes, ocean mapping and land use and land cover change studies.

Activities at UNH's GIS Day include presentations on the three key technologies used today in the geo-spatial sciences, -- GIS, GPS (global positioning system) and remote sensing -- a tour of the Complex Systems Research Center's GIS and remote sensing laboratory, and an overview of educational and career opportunities in the geo-sciences. Geo-spatial science maps and poster displays from education, urban planning, emergency management, resource management, science and industry presenters will also be featured.

For more information, contact the UNH GIS Day 2000 Events Coordinator at 603-862-1792 or visit the UNH GIS Day 2000 Web site at http://www.rslab.sr.unh.edu/_dir_gisday/gisday.html

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